



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
Office of the Secretary  
Press Service



Release - Immediate

May 17, 1923.

RATS CAN NOT LONG SURVIVE  
EFFICIENT CONTROL METHODS

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A few very simple measures consistently employed will rid a farm or a community of rats, it is stated in a new Farmers' Bulletin, How to Get Rid of Rats, by James Silver, biological assistant of the Biological Survey, United States Department of Agriculture. Many of the poisons, viruses, traps, and contrivances sold for the purpose accomplish little real good. Rats are hard to exterminate, and regardless of the method employed, success attends only close application and persistent effort.

The all-important measures to be taken are the removal of food and shelter from the rats, poisoning and trapping them, and, under certain conditions, fumigating their burrows. These measures should be taken not only by individuals, but by entire communities. Foodstuffs should be stored in rat-proof containers, waste and garbage should be disposed of in tightly covered vessels, and no trash or refuse should be allowed to accumulate to provide food, shelter, or breeding places for the pests.

The most effective means known to the department for destroying rats is by poisoning, wherever it can be employed with safety. Barium carbonate has been found the most satisfactory of the various poisons that might be used. The bulletin gives directions for applying it successfully. Trapping is equally effective, but requires more skill and labor. It is recommended where the use of poison seems inadvisable. The simple and inexpensive snap type of trap, strongly made, is all that is necessary. Where there are large

numbers of rats a good many traps should be used.

In fields, along ditches, banks and levees, around farm buildings, and in dirt cellars, rat burrows dug in solid earth may sometimes be fumigated with carbon bisulphide, or with the exhaust from a gasoline engine, such as an automobile or tractor. The exhaust is directed into the rat burrow by means of a hose, and the entrance around the hose is sealed with damp earth. In seed warehouses and similar structures where sacked grain is stored temporarily, a liberal supply of flake naphthalene has been found to keep rats away. The use of these flakes where foodstuffs are stored is not recommended on account of the odor.

The importance of rat-proofing existing buildings as far as possible and of building new ones so that they are absolutely rat-proof can not be too greatly emphasized. Rat-proofing a building is in the long run the cheapest rat-insurance, and is the best and most permanent means of rat riddance. Efficient rat dogs often help, but cats are rarely useful against rats. Cooperative rat hunts are effective and furnish good sport to participants. Organized rat campaigns are very desirable because without general community cooperation, individual places which are cleaned up are constantly exposed to reinfestation from adjacent property. Assistance in planning, organizing, and prosecuting anti-rat campaigns will gladly be given by the Biological Survey in the form of direct aid whenever practicable, or by furnishing plans, instructions, publicity material, and sample posters with which communities can carry on their own campaign against this most destructive animal in the world.

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